The Mining

The integrity of the ecological and cultural values of The Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve is seriously threatened by proposed strip mining for bauxite in its western area.

The area on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve represents approximately 1% of the bauxite area under mining interests on western Cape York, but is of exceptionally high conservation significance.

Each of the impacts also results in further "knock on" effects across the landscape and further downstream in the river systems.

The Strip mining process will involve total vegetation destruction by bulldozer of over approximately 12,300 hectares, and the removal of three or more metres of bauxite.

Total loss of original biodiversity, including all vegetation and wildlife, and the entire landscape is lowered by 3 - 5 metres.

The supporting bauxite substrate on which the various plants and animals have taken millennia to evolve and adapt to cannot be replaced.

Regenerated areas never recover to original condition and biodiversity, and lack the large habitat trees with hollows that are crucial for nesting birds, possums, and goannas.
What about the Springs?

Strip mined areas suffer from greatly altered hydrology.

The semi absorbent bauxite layer is no longer present to filter water down into the aquifer, and there is increased water run-off during the wet season rains.

There are grave concerns how this altered hydrology will affect the perennial function of the Perched Bauxite Springs and the Wenlock River.

These relic springs survive only because of the stable outflow of water from the bauxite plateau aquifer.

Increased wet season run off is going to increase turbidity and sedimentation of the Wenlock River, affecting sea grass beds downstream in Port Musgrave which are crucial feeding grounds for endangered marine turtle and dugong populations.

The increased wet season run off may also cause major flooding of crocodile nests, flooding which is currently mitigated by the absorbent effects of the bauxite layer which exists on a landscape scale.
The Wenlock River

The Wenlock River is one of Australia’s most ecologically significant rivers and runs for 65 kilometres along the southern boundary of the Reserve.

The Wenlock has the highest number of freshwater fish species of any Australian River.

It is as a crucial sanctuary for populations of endangered Freshwater Sawfish and supports Queensland’s largest population of the “vulnerable” Estuarine Crocodile.

Unusual fish such as the poorly known “Freshwater Whiptail Ray” and the “Freshwater Sole” are common in the Wenlock.

The “rare” Palm Cockatoo and Spotted Cuscus (a rare type of possum), the Magnificent Riflebird and Trumpet Manucode, the Orange footed Scrub Fowl, and the huge Amethystine Python are all iconic species of the Wenlock’s rainforests.

The lower estuarine sections (downstream from the Reserve) likewise provide crucial habitat for rare and threatened marine and estuarine wildlife including Spear Toothed Sharks, Dugong, and Irrawaddy River Dolphins.

The Tentpole Creek section of the Wenlock system has the best Estuarine Crocodile nesting habitat in Queensland.

The water extraction proposal from the Wenlock by the Mining Company involves a daily extraction rate of 20 million litres/day which is more than what the city of Cairns uses in a day.

There are major concerns this will shrink the “freshwater pool” that moves up and down the river with tidal movement. Increased salinity will affect estuarine wildlife and vegetation and cause the death of riparian rainforest plants which are not salt tolerant.

-ENDS-
The Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve

The 135,000 hectares of the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve stretches across the remote Cape York landscape in a mosaic of tropical savannah woodlands, rainforests, rivers, creeks and wetlands like a big, irregular patchwork quilt.

Thirty five different Ecosystem types have been confirmed to occur on the Reserve to date. This represents outstanding biodiversity.

They are all crucial parts of the bigger “jigsaw puzzle” across the Wenlock and Ducie River catchments and provide critical habitat and corridors for a wide range of dependant wildlife and plants.

To date, 154 native bird, 43 reptile, 18 amphibian, 15 mammal, and 43 freshwater fish species have been recorded on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve – 264 vertebrate species in total.

Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve (SIWR), the conservation property funded and set aside by the National Reserve System Programme as a tribute to Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin, is being threatened by strip mining.

The 135,000 ha property, in Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, is home to a set of eight unique spring fed wetlands which provide a critical water source to threatened habitat, provide permanent flow of water to the Wenlock River, and is home to rare and vulnerable plants and wildlife.

Terri Irwin has vowed to protect the property: “this wetland conservation property is a tribute to Steve. I will do whatever I can to protect it,” she said.

How YOU can help... Visit www.australianzoo.com.au and sign our online petition to make your vote count!

For more information about the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve and the fight to Save Steve’s Place, contact:
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